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Sent: 2/21/2012 3:28:26 PM

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Lenox is a couple miles east of our study area.

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DEP: Cabot drilling caused methane in Lenox water wells

By Laura Legere (Staff Writer)
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Methane in three private water wells in Lenox Twp. seeped there from a flawed natural gas well drilled by Cabot Oil & Gas Corp., state environmental regulators have found.

An investigation by the Department of Environmental Protection determined that the gas migrated from at least one of three Marcellus Shale wells on the Stalter well pad about a half-mile west of Interstate 81 in Susquehanna County.

[Read the notice of violation HERE](#)

The gas was found seeping into three water supplies in August. A fourth water well for a hunting cabin is still being evaluated, DEP spokesman Daniel Spadoni said.

Video from inside one of Cabot's gas wells showed that a string of steel casing meant to seal off the aquifer from contaminants was improperly constructed, according to a notice of violation sent by DEP in September.

Methane was also found between the cemented strings of casing in all three gas wells on the Stalter pad, a sign state regulators view as evidence of flaws in a well's construction.

The dissolved methane in one nearby water supply jumped from 0.3 milligrams per liter before drilling began to 49 milligrams per liter on Aug. 16 and 57 milligrams per liter on Aug. 18, according to the violation notice.

Cabot installed methane detection alarms in three homes and vented the three affected water wells to keep the methane from accumulating and creating an explosion risk. The company is also delivering replacement drinking water to two of the homes, Mr. Spadoni said. The methane in the third water

well has decreased so the home does not require an alternate water supply, he said.

Cabot spokesman George Stark said Friday that the company submitted a detailed response to the DEP and is working with regulators on the issue.

"Cabot is committed to safe and responsible operations and takes matters like this very seriously," he said. "We believe in fact-based, scientific research to guide any necessary corrective actions."

Department regulators sent Cabot a violation notice on Sept. 19, but neither the department's public eFACTS compliance database nor its monthly oil and gas violations report noted the inspection or violations until last week, when a Times-Tribune reporter asked about the investigation.

DEP policy requires the oil and gas program to update the eFACTS database within 10 working days of completing an inspection or mailing a notice of violations.

Mr. Spadoni said the missing information was "an oversight."

Read more: <http://thetimes-tribune.com/news/dep-cabot-drilling-caused-methane-in-lenox-water-wells-1.1255056#ixzz1jFuKMzvy>

DEP head calls EPA knowledge of Dimock 'rudimentary'

By Laura Legere (Staff Writer)

Published: January 11, 2012

http://thetimes-tribune.com/polopoly_fs/1.1256187%21/image/3336912236.jpg_gen/derivatives/landscape_490/3336912236.jpg

Federal regulators have only a "rudimentary" understanding of the facts and history of gas drilling's impact on water supplies in Dimock Twp., Pennsylvania's head environmental regulator wrote in a letter Thursday as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency considered beginning its own sampling of tainted wells in the township.

In the letter to EPA Region 3 Administrator Shawn Garvin, state Department of Environmental Protection Secretary Michael Krancer said his agency is ready to help the EPA get "up to speed" on the situation in Dimock since it is "clear that EPA is really at the very early stages of its learning curve" regarding the "technical facts" and "enforcement history" there.

The letter was first posted on NPR's StateImpact Pennsylvania website Monday night. Copies were forwarded to all members of the Pennsylvania Congressional delegation.

[Read the letter HERE](#)

Mr. Krancer raised a cautionary comparison with the EPA's controversial preliminary finding linking fracking to contamination of Pavillion, Wyo., water supplies. The investigation was the first by a federal agency to suggest a connection between the gas-extraction process and groundwater contamination, but EPA's conclusions and its methodology have been challenged by Wyoming and industry officials.

"Suffice it to say that we hope that EPA's efforts here not be marked by the same rush to conclusions

and other deficiencies here as it was and continues to be with respect to the Pavilion (sic) matter," he wrote.

EPA spokeswoman Terri White said in a statement Tuesday that Mr. Garvin reached out to Mr. Krancer regarding EPA's activities in Dimock and the agency plans to work cooperatively with DEP.

"We continue to keep Mr. Krancer and the Department updated as we're actively reviewing the situation in Dimock and filling information gaps," she said.

Dimock has been one of the most prominent sites in the debate over the safety of natural gas drilling and development since 2009, when state regulators determined that faulty Marcellus Shale wells drilled by Cabot Oil & Gas Corp. were responsible for methane contamination affecting 19 homes. Cabot has said natural conditions, not its operations, caused the contamination.

Cabot halted bulk and bottled water deliveries to the homes on Dec. 1 after the state said the company had met the relevant terms of a December 2010 settlement over the contamination - including offering to install methane removal systems that many residents have rejected, saying they do not remove metals and other contaminants in their water.

Federal environmental regulators reopened their investigation of Dimock water wells on Dec. 29 after first declaring on Dec. 2 that outside water tests showed the well water posed no "immediate health threat."

The agency reviewed Cabot water tests released after the Dec. 2 announcement and became "concerned about" the number of water wells potentially impacted, data gaps in the water sampling, and if residents have access to proper treatment systems or alternate water supplies.

On Friday, several EPA officials called to arrange emergency deliveries of bulk water to several Dimock residents who were running out of supplies, then retracted the promise on Saturday.

In response to a question about the EPA's actions last weekend, Ms. White repeated an earlier statement that the agency is "actively reviewing the situation in Dimock and filling information gaps" as well as "evaluating next steps including sampling some of the residences' well water."

"We have not made a decision to provide water at this time," she said.

Dimock residents pursuing a federal lawsuit against Cabot over the contamination were chagrined by Mr. Krancer's letter, which described Dimock as having "truly a high degree of 'neighbor versus neighbor' emotion" and added that "science and fact have too often been eclipsed by the strong emotions" there.

"Emotional?" Dimock resident Victoria Switzer said Tuesday. "It's pretty hard not to be emotional after three years of not being able to drink your water and repeated broken promises by your regulatory agencies."

While Mr. Krancer asked in his letter that the EPA's "efforts be guided by sound science and the law instead of emotion and publicity," Mrs. Switzer saw a different message to federal regulators.

"It's definitely a warning: Don't find anything," she said.

Contact the writer: llegere@timeshamrock.com

Read more: <http://thetimes-tribune.com/news/dep-head-calls-epa-knowledge-of-dimock-rudimentary->

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